

TEXTILE MUSEUM JOURNAL



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COVER: Detail of interlocked tapestry band (illustrated in full above). Alternating winged messengers holding staffs, and frontal human figures standing on balsa rafts (?). Classic Tiahuanaco. Coyungo, Rio Grande Valley, Peru. About A.D. 900. Textile Museum 1965.32.1. On view in the Ancient Peruvian Textiles Exhibition through April 15, 1967.

DRAWINGS by Milton Franklin Sondag, Jr.

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BOUQUETS FOR MISS EMERY

The publication of Irene Emery's monumental work *The Primary Structures of Fabrics* this year was without question the most important single event in the 41-year history of the Textile Museum. It may, therefore, be understandable that we cannot refrain from sharing with you a few of the enthusiastic and well-deserved messages of congratulations that have come to Miss Emery from all sectors of the textile field.

Some of the most warmly appreciated letters came from friends and colleagues who had watched the progress of the ambitious project over 19 dedicated and difficult years. René Batigne, who was Director of the Museum when Miss Emery joined the staff 12 years ago, observed: "I knew from the start that, conditions permitting, you had in you the capacity to clarify and bring forth such a vast and intricate subject." The reaction of the Museum's Trustees is typified by that of Dr. Richard Ettinghausen who wrote: "I cannot imagine a more systematic and all-inclusive publication and one in which the material is better handled and more beautifully produced . . . you certainly can be proud, as is the Textile Museum for having published it."

The most welcome praise an author can receive comes from those "potential users" for whom his book is written. The response from handweavers has been particularly gratifying. Harriet Tidball's enthusiastic letter included remarks such as "Your evaluations, so delicately and lucidly handled, with such magnificent judgment, will bring a new dimension to the Handwoven textile field," and "Weavers now have a basis for understanding and communicating adequately." But her highest praise was encompassed by the statement, "For my own publications I shall follow your classification and terminology from here on." (This she has done in her latest publication, *Supplementary Warp Patterning*, Monograph 17 of the Shuttle Craft Guild.)

Another author-weaver who promises to make full use of Miss Emery's classification system in his future writing is Peter Collingwood whose letter was filled with much appreciated, thoughtful comment and discussion as well as praise. His review in the September 1966 *Quarterly Journal of the Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers* is by far the most thorough and perceptive that has yet appeared. It is quoted at some length, since it neatly sums up the reaction of the textile specialists:

It is a generously-sized beautifully made

book and the first impression is of the extraordinary number of superb photographs . . .

After first impressions, the text itself; and here the reader meets Irene Emery's mind picking as clear a path as possible through the wordy jungle, discarding a term here, suggesting an alternative there. She never lays down the law or gives once-and-for-all definitions, but carefully displays the existing mud-dle in each corner of the fabric field and then guides the reader to a reasonable solution. Her opinions are backed up by a study of the use of each term and technique in the literature of all countries and at all levels. The 50-page bibliography is probably the longest in any book on fabrics and lists well over 1,000 publications. This is a source book in itself and will, I am sure, be a springboard for further study by many readers.

Irene Emery's fairminded logical attitude to nomenclature is what I think will finally have most effect on readers. It is also bound to have a significant effect on all future writers on textiles. 'Consulting Emery' will become the first (and reflex) action of anyone wanting to name or place a technique. And if she does not mention it directly, then they will try to evolve a name as descriptive and unambiguous as are hers. Descriptive is the key-word here. Her aim has been to do away with nomenclature that only has meaning in one place and at one time (e.g. Holbein Stitch, Bronson Weave) and in its place to suggest descriptive terms that are immediately understandable and easily translatable into other languages.

It is obvious that others besides textile specialists will benefit from this basic work. Doctors Clifford Evans and Betty Meggers of the Smithsonian Institution complain in good humor that "Nobody now can write poor descriptions of their textile fragments. And this is what bothers us. Now we will be expected to present the proper terminology for anything we handle in Archeology! . . . Time will prove this is a classic in its field. . . ."

Book orders continue to come in at a very satisfying rate. Now that her magnum opus is out of the way, Miss Emery is looking forward to writing short papers on problems of special interest in her field. Meanwhile she is devoting her considerable talents to the improvement of the Museum's cataloging procedures and the training of new curatorial personnel.